

# Miscellaneous Notes

## 1. MUSK SHREWS FEEDING ON LEECHES

Commenting on B. K. Behura's note [*JBNHS* 55 (3): 552] on a musk shrew (*Suncus murinus*) attacking a keelback (*Natrix stollata*), the editors of this journal mentioned the widely varied dietary of the musk shrew, which includes besides cockroaches and other insects which are its normal food being an Insectivore, various other animals like scorpions, toads, bull-frogs, suckling guinea pigs, as well as vegetable matter like roots, grain ?, and bread, etc. Elsewhere, Deoras and Gokhale have recorded [*JBNHS* 55 (3): 459] baby rats and mice also in the dietary of the musk shrew.

Recently, I have observed rather an odd item in their dietary. While keeping for experimental purposes over a hundred live leeches (*Foraminobdella heptamerata*) in a wide-mouthed open earthenware vessel, I was noticing a conspicuous dwindling in their numbers every morning, but no dead ones could be seen in the container. Unfortunately, I was neither aware of the presence of two musk shrews in my house nor of their nocturnal pilferings of my leeches till one evening, when I noticed them at dusk getting up the vessel in my very presence, poking their snouts right into the water, snatching the leeches, and rushing off with them to the nearest retreat.

In about a week's time nearly eighty leeches were knocked off this way. Sometimes I noticed dead leeches floating, with cuts on their body, probably the shrew-bites. These dead and stinking ones seem to attract the shrews more, because, when the vessel was removed to concealment, the shrews could easily scent their way up.

It is rather unlikely in nature for leeches to come within reach of musk shrews, which normally inhabit human surroundings, but I wonder whether the shrews would resort to hunting after this strange food, if they happen to live in the vicinity of leech infested waters.

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY,  
MADRAS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE,  
TAMBARAM, SOUTH INDIA,  
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P. J. SANJEEVA RAJ